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CHIEF CAUSES OF DISCONTENT IN INDIA.

BY A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR.

DEFEAT after defeat for the British arms—or, disaster after disaster, as we prefer to call them when the loss is on our side—has stared us in the face since the beginning of our war with the Transvaal. England has had to witness the sad spectacle of her most popular generals pass from the status of exalted tacticians to that of blunderers. We may well ask what we are to look for next. We are told in Mr. Balfour's late speech in Manchester that "the Government was absolutely ignorant of the actual strength of the Boers; that there was no official knowledge that the Boers had all mounted soldiers; that they possessed armored trains and artillery as good, if not better, than ours;" and all this, to use Mr. Balfour's words, "because there was nobody to tell us of the importance of these things." Yet, leaving aside the advisability of embarking in such a war, neither the generals nor the home Government are altogether directly to blame for our unpreparedness and its fatal results. There is no doubt whatever that from beginning to end they had been grossly misinformed. It would, however, be interesting to know how it was that they came to be so misinformed. Was it ignorance on the part of our local officials or wilfulness?

Let us take the South African question as an example of what might happen to us in India should ill-fortune further attend our arms in South Africa. Hardly since the beginning of the present war, have I heard mention, or speculation, as to what moral effect our lost battles in Africa might have on the natives of our great Indian dependency. Why is this? Because the home public are led to believe that we are invincible in India; that we have there a well-regulated and powerful Government, an efficient and sufficient army; that we are beloved by the natives, and that never will there

be a rising of the population against the British, such as the mutiny of 1857. For some years it has apparently been the policy of the Government to hide from the public anything that might bring criticism on the doings of its officials; and the people have so far been astoundingly ready to swallow, in perfect faith, all that has been served to them; this owing to the commendable faith they have in their leaders. One thing in England that must strike a travelled man is the absolute lack of knowledge on the part of the Government and the majority of the people regarding our colonies, chiefly those in Asia. This ignorance, as I have already said, must to a certain extent be excused, since it is caused by the incompetency of the officials there employed. I have known of several cases where the Government has been and is still grossly misled and misinformed by local officers. Speaking from my own experience, an official of no less importance than a certain Lieutenant-Governor still in office in India, at a conference which I attended regarding my Tibetan troubles, had not the slightest notion where his northern frontier was, and his geographical knowledge was so meagre that he actually asked me whether one important town in his own province was a suburb of Lhasa in Tibet! As for the frontier tribes, their characteristics, their troubles, the Lieutenant-Governor scarce knew of their existence. Other officials present, with the exception of two, were just as vague regarding information on matters relating to their own district and frontier, and I could quote one instance where, possibly through the ignorance of the informer, the House of Commons has been shamefully misled concerning affairs on our frontier and disgraceful abuses to our natives.

There is no doubt that our Indian Empire has not forgotten the lesson received in 1857, and the people are beginning to get accustomed, although not reconciled, to our civilization. The civil administration of the country is theoretically much improved; in fact, so improved that, for practical purposes, it would suit the natives better were it not quite so perfect. The Government since the time of the Mutiny has not left a stone unturned to establish British rule on a firmer basis, and the native population, first aghast and suspicious at the radical changes which we made in their country, have fallen in with apparent readiness with our Western mode of locomotion, our telegraphs, postal system, and education. We now find excellent universities

in Calcutta, Bombay, Allahabad, Madras and Lahore, where the English language is not only taught, but actually used as a medium of instruction; and such, I believe, is also the case in many of the primary schools of the principal towns and stations. Lower and primary schools are innumerable all over the country and are well attended, the natives showing a keen desire to have their boys instructed according to Western notions. They, nevertheless, display much reticence and even objection to having their women educated. It has been found from experience that the promotion of education has only been thoroughly appreciated by the natives when founded to a certain extent upon lines indigenous to the land, when the changes from the Eastern to the Western mode of thinking have not been too sudden, and when they combine in themselves some of the conservative traits so dear to Asiatics with the go-aheadativeness so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon.

There are scattered about India a number of private missionary schools, and, where conducted in a reasonable and tactful fashion, they are doing good.

The public schools are under the supervision of a provincial department of public instruction, and they are subsidized by the Government, which spares no trouble in attempting to support and perfect all such institutions. This is very commendable, and the natives should be grateful, for indeed a boy can to-day receive in India an education as good as, if not better than, he would in England. Unfortunately, it will be found on closely studying the natives that these very fellows who have been educated by us to a point much too high for their social position in the scale of human races are the first to turn enemies of Britain, of the Government, of all imported institutions. With their superior education they obtain great power over the less educated masses, and, having learned our weak points, they are not loth in secretly spreading revolutionary ideas among the people. These fellows, nominally by examination, in reality mostly through protection, generally manage to obtain Government billets. Showing abject servility to British officials, they manage to get a thorough insight into the most secret doings and condition of the Government. It is to be hoped that we shall not live to see how this information may be used by them.

But to proceed. The Government has established a regular

network of railways and roads, built firm bridges over every river, and canals have been cut in all directions to provide against that sword of Damocles that ever hangs over India's head—famine. Extensive granaries and stores are kept in hand to supply the population, and strict measures are enforced to minimize its sufferings. Government officials are despatched to work among the people, rendering assistance to all who require it. Yet when famine comes, precautions of no mean scale have to be adopted for fear of a rising.

The Hindoo population, as everybody knows, is divided into a number of castes. Roughly speaking, the chief ones are the Brahmin or priestly caste; the Rajputs, the “King's followers” or warrior class, and the agricultural settlers, the servile classes, subdivided into minor divisions, such as Sudras, etc. Then there are over fifty-seven millions following the religion of Mohammed, who seem to be in constant friction with the Hindoos. Serious riots between Mussulmans and Hindoos are frequent in the larger towns. We have a small percentage of Christian converts, subdivided into innumerable creeds, each at war with all the others, and in their turn looked down upon with the utmost contempt by both Hindoos of all castes and Mussulmans, not to speak of the English community.

Last, but not least, there is in India a large number of Eurasians, or half-castes, unfortunates possessing all the evil qualities and none of the good of both the English and native races. In a way, if this is the case, they individually are not altogether to blame for it. It is through no fault of their own. People are hard upon them, almost to the point of cruelty. They are treated little better than vermin by the British; they are ridiculed by the natives; they are excluded from Anglo-Indian society—a small loss, if you like, yet one which they much feel. They are generally refused admittance to local English clubs. No one associates with them; they are outcasts, and the stigma of a fault which was not their own is at every occasion thrown in their faces. These well-educated fellows, as a rule, possess wonderful brain power, joining the acuteness of the Asiatic with the smartness of the European. Hated by their own parents, looked down upon by all, they keep among themselves, forming a distinct class of their own. Unable to raise themselves from the mud, not because they lack ability, but because they are forcibly

kept there, it is no wonder that all the good in them, if ever there was any, has been stamped out, and that they detest the British for the treatment they receive.

One of the worst pests in India, however—one which we have created and which is the chief cause of the ever-growing ill-feeling of the natives against the British—is the swarm of unscrupulous pleaders, or native lawyers. This disreputable class we have introduced in the country, in order that law may be administered according to Western ideas. These fellows, whom we have thoroughly trained into the mysteries of our law, take advantage—naturally enough and with the object of filling their own pockets—of the ignorance of the natives to encourage legal procedure on the slightest pretext. Any one who has visited India knows well enough the mean, quarrelsome nature of the inhabitants, especially in money matters. These lawyers have no difficulty in finding fertile soil wherein to sow the seed of discord and litigation. To a casual observer, this would seem only to affect the parties concerned, but the evil is much further reaching. Like most other Asiatics, the Indian is born in intrigue, lives in it and for it and dies at it. Save the younger generation, which is better educated, the majority of the people are absolutely ignorant of the complicated technicalities that in our Western law are necessary to conduct a case in court. Thus, in a moment of weakness, petty quarrels that could be settled easily by the good advice of an honest friend, are dragged by the pleaders from one court to another indefinitely, until one or both litigants become penniless. But this long, tedious, expensive way of settling quarrels is not to the taste of the Asiatic native. He has always lived in servility, and he likes to have a master whom he honors and can look up to—a master who can tell him straight when he is right or wrong, a man before whose authority he can bow, and who is able to define and give sound judgment on any civil or criminal case without having to appeal to a higher court. Suspicious as the natives are, often with reason, of intrigue and bribes to influence the magistrate, the very existence of courts of appeal is only put down by them as a check to the incompetency and dishonesty of the various magistrates. Thus, with rare exceptions, there are few magistrates in India that, in the eyes of the native masses, command absolute respect and confidence. The most honest and just of them are never trusted by the

natives; and, if the people go to law, it is not with the intention of obtaining justice, but simply to gamble. The serious fact that many of our magistrates are incompetent youths hardly out of their teens, with no experience of the world and an overbearing manner, goes far to shake the confidence of the nation in the respect that the officials of the Queen should not fail to command. We want men like Sir Henry Ramsay, who administered the law in his own patriarchal fashion, was a thorough gentleman, firm, just, courteous and paternal, and who to-day, many years after his death, is still remembered by the natives of Kumaon Province, as a *dehtha*, a god, "whose like," they add, "alas! we shall never see again in India." Notwithstanding the technical faults which the new class of petty "shop keeper" officials attribute to him, I rather doubt whether there is, or ever will be, in India an official so highly respected and adored. He went by the name of "King of Kumaon," a nominal title which he fully deserved, a title, indeed, different from that applied to his present successor. Sir Henry studied and understood the natives, he enforced his will upon them, he treated them with courtesy, and by so doing gained their confidence. He was their father, their adviser, their comforter, not an unapproachable figurehead, like some of our present officials, whose tactless snobbishness gives a shocking example to the natives, and brings their hatred upon the whole British nation.

There is a belief prevalent among the younger lot of "civil officers" that it is only by slashing the natives with a whip across the face for no plausible reason, by not allowing them to approach, by treating those of high birth like low tramps, by never condescending to shake hands with even the noblest of them, that the prestige of the British Empire can be kept high in the estimation of the population of India. The most common answer one receives when astonishment is shown at such conduct, is: "Well, you see, we have not forgotten the Mutiny of 1857. We must impress the natives that we are the rulers." And they never perceive that the best way to bring about another mutiny is the pursuance of this short-sighted policy. In a country like India where a gentlemanly and courteous manner, more than anything else, appeals to the mind of the people, and where officials are judged by what they do and not by what they think themselves; in a country where the minutest actions of individual Britishers are watched, discussed with an unusual amount of sound sense

and magnified either in exaggerated praise or condemnation; and, moreover, with the astounding rapidity with which the natives can spread and circulate news all over the country, it is a great pity that so much and fast-increasing discontent and actual ill-feeling against the British is created by the inexperience and narrow-mindedness of some of our "civilians." A thoroughly insular but much mistaken notion is imported with these boys in the Civil Service, that every man who is not an Englishman is "a nigger;" and as they seldom take the trouble to study or try to understand the natives over whom they are given so much power, as they seldom or never move among them, they rarely learn to discriminate that even among "niggers" there are men of brains, there are gentlemen whose acquaintance is worthy of being cultivated and even revered. Let me give an instance.

"Get out of my way, you dirty nigger!" shouted one day a certain Deputy Commissioner in the North West Province, to a wealthy and most honorable native, who had approached him, stooping low and with a grand salaam—a gracious custom to express his pleasure at the official's visit to his village. The *chaprassis* who stood by the pompous youth, hearing the angry words of their master, seized the native gentleman and knocked him out of the Sahib's path.

"Why did you do that?" I asked the Deputy Commissioner. "Oh," said he, twisting up the ends of his diminutive, fair moustache, "we have to keep up the prestige of England. That is the only way we can make them feel we are their superiors. That man will have the greatest respect for me now."

It is usually my habit to hear both sides of a story before forming an opinion. Having heard the official, I proceeded to interrogate the native, who, half-ashamed and deeply hurt, stood sulkily a little way off.

He salaamed me, and, much to his astonishment and delight, I salaamed him back and entered into a most instructive and pleasant conversation regarding the country around, the natives, their customs, trade, etc.

"What do you think of Mr. —, the Deputy Commissioner?"

"Oh, Sahib," said the old gentleman, "it is a pity the *Maharanee* (Queen) Victoria does not now send to us men of good birth and breeding. We would gladly give our lives for them, a thing we will never do for fellows . . . like that." And,

with an expression of the most absolute contempt, he spat upon the ground to give strength to the expression of his feelings.

"What has he done to you?"

"He thinks, by not returning my salaam and having me thrown back by his *chaprassis*, that he is a *bura Sahib*.* But men of high position are kind to their fellow creatures, whether poor or rich, white or colored. I will tell you. Some years ago, when the Queen's first son (the Prince of Wales) came to India, I waited on the road at Cawnpore to see him. I got near the carriage and I salaamed. The Prince, the highest man in your country, returned my salaam; yet a mere servant of the country, like the Deputy Commissioner, who is fed at our expense, never returns salaam for any one. That shows that he is a man of low breeding. We love and worship the Sahibs that are just and kind, but we cannot appreciate the like of that man." Here another expectoration.

I agreed with the native, remarking that spitting is a bad habit. He said he only did it when he spoke of men that were unclean. I have mentioned this incident, for it depicts the feelings of most natives.

Another source of friction and discontent is the coolie question as applied to travelling officials. It is compulsory for every village to supply a certain number of coolies when requested by the official's *chaprassis*, and also provisions, etc., for which the natives should receive payment. Each coolie is usually entitled to a pay of four annas (four pence) for a march the length of which is established by local regulations and varies from about eight to fifteen miles, according to locality and condition of roads. These coolies are wretched creatures, who live from hand to mouth, and whose miserable existence can but excite the pity of any traveller. Yet I have known an official, who, while furnishing each coolie with a load considerably heavier than they are supposed to carry, illegally cut down their already meagre pay by about one-half. Result of this, abuse of Sahibs in general all along the line, natural comments on what became of the other half of the pay to which they were entitled and which they knew the official received in full from the Government, and disgrace and dishonesty applied to Her Majesty's servants at random. Another frequent occurrence when officials travel is the casual

* A great man; used in the sense of a high officer.

way in which they leave money matters regarding the purchase of provisions for their swarm of followers, to be settled by *moonshees*, *bearers* or *kamsamas*. In many cases, the villagers are made to provide food for all the camp and amounting, for them, to quite a small fortune, and although the official may be under the impression that he is paying for it all, not a penny reaches those who supply the goods, but the money is instead divided among dishonest servants. The villagers have no way of approaching the officials to complain; for, if they do, they are ejected by the very servants who have swindled them of their due. Every time that I have travelled through India, it has been a source of great pain to hear the complaints of the poor villagers against the individual doings of officials; and many a time I have blushed to think the almost incredible fact that my own countrymen can lower themselves to take advantage of poor natives. I can quote even worse. A Deputy Commissioner well known all over the North West Provinces for his dishonesty, intrigue, misconduct and ignorance—yet with all this a *protégé* of the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces—for purposes best known to himself, tried to compel natives to give false evidence in a certain case. He threatened them with *imprisonment if they spoke the truth*, he forged statements of several witnesses, and having been discovered, caught *flagrante delicto*, was severely reprimanded by the Government, and was removed from the hill station, where he occupied the highest post. Although in disgrace, I am told that he is still in the Civil Service.

Now, I do not believe that there are many who go quite so far as this; but people in England have no idea how much harm even one man of that kind may do in a district of several hundred thousand people. If one points out these facts concerning our officials, it is merely to show that if we continue to pour into India men unfit to govern—men who, like our Intelligence Department in South Africa, mostly through ignorance and self-reliance, grossly misinform the Government—no doubt we will find that sooner or later we will have in India a disagreeable surprise, which will be even less expected, and probably more felt, than our Transvaal trouble. This is not the time to unnecessarily alarm the nation, only it is well that England keep her eyes open, for should we have more disasters in Africa, India, no doubt, would be the first colony to give us trouble. The abject

servility of the natives may deceive the casual and inexperienced observer; but under it is, half-smothered yet ready to flare up again, a flame which the slightest ill-wind might develop into a destructive fire. Much harm is done in that direction by the scurrilous native press of India. These papers are usually edited by pleaders and hot-headed students, their main object of publication being to attack the Government and create a general ill-feeling against the British. Too much freedom is allowed to these sheets, the writers of which are interested instigators of riots and quarrels between religious factions, as well as gross misrepresenters of the policy of Great Britain in her Indian Empire. But one thing above all which England needs must see to—and it has been plainly shown in the unfortunate blunders in South Africa—is that she ought to be careful in the selection of men to whom her interests are entrusted. Ignorance is bliss, no doubt, but when we have to contend with rapidly progressing adversaries such as Russia, we had better not fall again into the fatal blunder of overestimating our power and resources.

The days of placidly relying on our prestige have passed; we have educated the natives; we have spoiled them to a great extent; we have given them a freedom which they neither understand nor appreciate, and they do not thank us for it, no matter what the official reports may say. Were a great conflict to take place between England and the ever-advancing Russia, I much doubt whether we could rely on our Indian subjects to stand *en masse* by us. There are many things that might be said, only let England find out thoroughly how she stands in India before it is too late. A good step was taken in appointing Lord Curzon as Viceroy. A man of his talent, firmness, knowledge and tact is bound to do endless good in India. Even during the short time he has been in office, he has been able to win back to a certain extent the hearts of the natives who were wavering, and with his sound judgment and his fearless temperament, he has already been able to do away with much of the endless and incomprehensible red tape, intrigue and protection that have of late made us so disliked by the natives. "To me," he said in a speech at a *darbar* held lately in Lucknow, "it seems that the times have passed by when the ruler or the deputies of rulers can anywhere live with impunity in the clouds of Olympus. They must descend from the hilltops and visit the haunts of men." That is just what is wanted

in India. Let all the officials grasp the meaning of those words and let them carry them out in practice. Let them remember that whether yellow, or brown, or black, the natives of India are human after all; therefore why not within their compass treat them as human? Certainly I think it is unwise to give them immeasurable freedom in one direction and absurd restrictions in another, such as the sanitary regulations which are no doubt quite in keeping with the requirements of Brighton, Eastbourne or Westgate-on-Sea, but somewhat hard on the nerves of Orientals who have their villages perched on the slopes of the Himalayas. There is at present in India too much done in the line of adapting villages and towns to the standard of the various suburban localities in England, from which the young officials have arrived direct. A little experience, however, ought to teach them that what is good in Brixton or Hampstead Heath is hardly conducive to the happiness of Hindoos or Mohammedans, and is often in conflict with their religious ideas. Much unnecessary friction might easily be avoided. I have always found that with a little common sense and fairness one can easily get great power over the natives, who wish for nothing better than to be well led. Another most exasperating thing for the natives is the constant change in their ideas and methods of living. Each succeeding officer invariably finds that all that his predecessors had done in that direction was all wrong. What the natives are told is to-day the right thing to do, is to-morrow disgraceful, and the next day right again. Conservative and sound enough in their own reasoning as they are, how can they have confidence in us? They are puzzled, they can well see through it all; they conclude that our officials are incapable, nor, indeed, can one blame them for it.

There is, so far, no cause for immediate alarm, yet let England be on her guard. If prepared she will no doubt hold her own, but I repeat again, let her be prepared.

A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR.